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Assembly California Legislature



PEDRO NAVA
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, THIRTY-FIFTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES:
CHAIR, BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 5
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CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION
COUNCIL

October 18, 2005

Doug Bosco, Chair
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 11th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

Subject: Support for the Matilija Dam Project

Dear Chair Bosco:

I am writing to express my support for the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project and Ventura River restoration effort.

Constructed in 1947, Matilija Dam was intended to provide a local water supply for agricultural needs, while offering limited flood protection for downstream communities. Over its 50 years of life, the build-up of sediment behind the dam wall has undermined both of those original functions.

The presence of the dam has adversely impacted the ecosystems of the Ventura River and the Matilija Creek, preventing the natural flow of sand and sediment from the mountains to the beaches and blocking endangered southern steelhead trout from reaching the place of their ancestral spawning and rearing. Today, more than half of the original steelhead spawning habitat lies locked behind the dam.

The plan to remove Matilija Dam and restore the ecosystem is actively supported by all local governments, residents, and a broad coalition of state and national stakeholder organizations. The expeditious removal of Matilija Dam will provide for the recovery of California's endangered southern steelhead trout, the restoration of historic outdoor recreational opportunities, and replenishment of Ventura County's coastal beaches.

On September 23, 2005 the California Ocean Protection Council endorsed the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project and authorized the Secretary of the Resources Agency to "take actions necessary for its planning or implementation, including the allocation of up to \$2,000,000 of State funds appropriated to the Coastal Conservancy..." – an action that further solidifies the State's commitment to the removal of Matilija Dam.

Therefore, I support the recommendation before the Board and respectfully urge your favorable consideration of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

PEDRO NAVA
Assemblymember, 35th District



CHAIR, BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE
ON RESOURCES (NO. 3)
COMMITTEE MEMBER:
BUDGET
EDUCATION
TRANSPORTATION
WATER, PARKS AND WILDLIFE

Assembly California Legislature

FRAN PAVLEY
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, FORTY-FIRST DISTRICT

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October 17, 2005

Douglas Bosco, Chair, and Commissioners
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 11th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612-2530

**Re: October 27, 2005 meeting
Agenda Item #4 – SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Bosco and Commissioners:

I am very pleased to support the authorization of up to \$1 million to prepare the engineering designs that will move the Matilija Dam removal and restoration project forward. Although the dam itself is outside the 41st Assembly District, the ultimate goal of taking the dam down will help replenish beach sand and restore the steelhead trout population by allowing them to return to historic upstream spawning areas.

Thank you for what I hope will be your positive action on this funding authorization.

Sincerely,



FRAN PAVLEY,
Assemblymember, 41st District

FP:lr



VENTURA COUNTY

PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY
RONALD C. COONS
Agency Director

WATERSHED PROTECTION DISTRICT

October 18, 2005

Doug Bosco, Chair
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 11th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

Subject: Support for the Matilija Dam Project

Dear Chair Bosco:

On behalf of the Ventura County Watershed Protection District (District), I am writing to express support for the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project and Ventura River restoration effort.

The Matilija Dam, constructed in 1947 by the District, was intended to provide a local water supply for agricultural needs, while offering limited flood protection for downstream communities. Over its 50 years of life, the build-up of sediment behind the dam wall has undermined both of those original functions. Currently an estimated six million cubic yards of sediment lie behind the dam wall, leaving only a small, shallow reservoir that currently holds less than 500 acre-feet of water. In addition, the presence of the dam has adversely impacted the ecosystems of the Ventura River and the Matilija Creek, preventing the natural flow of sand and sediment from the mountains to the beaches and blocking endangered southern steelhead trout from reaching the place of their ancestral spawning and rearing. Today, more than half of the original steelhead spawning habitat lies locked behind the dam.

In June 2001, the US Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the District, initiated a feasibility study to assess the extent of Federal interest in removing the dam and restoring the ecosystem. In an effort to reach consensus among the many stakeholders, work groups were formed to address environmental concerns, public outreach, recreation, plan formulation, technical studies, and funding opportunities. The feasibility study was completed in December 2004, and in July 2005 the team initiated the design phase of the project. Key to these efforts was the support we received through the participation of the Coastal Conservancy.

The plan to remove Matilija Dam and restore the ecosystem is actively supported by local governments, residents, and a broad coalition of State and Federal stakeholder organizations. The expeditious removal of Matilija Dam will provide for the recovery of California's endangered southern steelhead trout, the restoration of historic outdoor recreational opportunities, and replenishment of Ventura County's coastal beaches.

Jeff Pratt
District Director

Lawrence Jackson
Water Quality/Environmental

Peter Sheydayi
Design/Construction

Sergio Vargas
Planning/Regulatory

Tom Lagier
Operations/Maintenance

Lowell Preston, Ph.D.
Water Resources Division

Mr. Bosco
October 18, 2005
Page 2 of 2

Therefore, the District supports the recommendation before the Board and respectfully urges your favorable consideration of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Sincerely,



Jeff Pratt, Director

Ventura County Watershed Protection District



Surfrider Foundation
Ventura County Chapter – Matilija Coalition
239 W Main St., Ventura, CA 93001
(805) 667-2222 www.matilija-coalition.org



October 19, 2005

Doug Bosco, Chair
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 11th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

Subject: Support for Matilija Dam Studies

Dear Chair Bosco:

I am writing on behalf of the Matilija Coalition, a group of environmental and citizen organizations working to restore the Ventura River watershed through the removal of Matilija Dam. The Matilija Coalition was formed in 2000 under leadership from the Surfrider Foundation, and serves as the primary public representative in the multi-agency effort to decommission Matilija Dam.

It is now widely recognized that human impacts to the coastal watersheds in Southern California have resulted in long-term degradation of coastal resources. This is especially evident in the loss of recreational beaches due to beach erosion and the endangered status of native anadromous fisheries.

Over the past decade, the Surfrider Foundation has taken a leadership role in presenting viable solutions to the crisis facing our coast. In this case, we have successfully worked with local, state, and federal agencies to take our proposal for dam removal, something that was once considered a radical concept, through to a completed federal feasibility study. Our goals have been to restore natural watershed processes to renew the natural coastal sediment supplies, and to provide fish passage to the historical spawning streams of the federally endangered southern steelhead trout. Since the first studies began in 1998, the State of California has provided the necessary support through the Coastal Conservancy. We now know that it is entirely feasible to decommission Matilija Dam, and the studies clearly document the environmental benefits of doing so. But with every winter storm that passes, Matilija Dam traps more beach sediment and limits the survival and recovery of the native steelhead trout.

We appreciate the support of the State of California that has made this project possible, and urge that continued support is needed to ensure that this effort is completed as quickly as possible. Upon its completion, this precedent-setting Ecosystem Restoration project will establish the State of California as a world leader in the restoration of our coastal resources.

Sincerely,

A. Paul Jenkin
Coordinator, Matilija Coalition
Environmental Director, Surfrider Foundation - Ventura County Chapter
(805) 648-4005 paul@matilija-coalition.org